



Summary

In search of support: the integrated police training mission in Kunduz, Afghanistan

Post-mission evaluation

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Objective and scope of the evaluation

Between 2011 and 2013, the Dutch ‘integrated police training mission’ (hereinafter referred to as ‘the mission’) took place in Afghanistan. Its aim was to help strengthen the civil police and the justice system, particularly in the province of Kunduz.

The mission consisted of several elements, the most important of which were the following:

- training of junior police officers (part of the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan (NTM-A));
- mentoring of middle-ranking and senior police officers (part of the European Union Police Mission (EUPOL) in Afghanistan);
- a rule of law programme consisting of financial support to a number of development projects aimed at improving the formal and informal justice systems in Kunduz.

In September 2017, the Dutch Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs confirmed in a letter to the House of Representatives that a so-called ‘post-mission evaluation’ would be carried out. This study was carried out from May 2018 to October 2019 by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB), which is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ substantively independent evaluation service.

The main objectives of this evaluation were: to provide insight into the probable impact achieved by the mission five years after it ended; to provide insight into the factors explaining to what extent the mission’s objectives have or have not been achieved five years after the mission ended; and to provide lessons for the future on what worked well and what worked less well. The research consisted of interviews (a total of 230 people from

Afghanistan, the Netherlands and Germany), two literature reviews and an analysis of documents from the ministries involved, EUPOL and the National Police.

This summary provides an overview of the main findings and of the recommendations that followed. For more detailed findings, as well as the methodological justification and limitations of the evaluation, please refer to the full report on the IOB website: www.iob-evaluatie.nl/publicaties/rapporten/2019/11/19/432-kunduz.



Results five years after the mission ended

Since 2003, there have been several international training missions for the police and the justice system in the Afghan province of Kunduz. Compared with the period prior to these missions, there has been improvement in the professional skills, professional behaviour and knowledge of police and justice officers in the province, but these improvements cannot be attributed one-to-one to the Dutch mission between 2011 and 2013. They are related to various factors, including the overall higher level of education in Afghanistan, pressure from local NGOs and civil society activists, efforts by the Afghan government, and many international missions and programmes, including the Dutch one.

The Regional Police Training Centre (RTC) near Kunduz city is still functioning. Its curriculum is broadly the same as in 2011-2013, supplemented with extra weapons training. There is also a mobile training team that has been inspired by the Dutch POMLTs (Police Mentoring and Liaison Teams).

AIBA (the Afghan Independent Bar Association supported by the Netherlands) is still functioning in Kunduz city. The number of registered lawyers in Kunduz rose from 21 in 2011 to 101 in 2018, including 14 women.

However, since the withdrawal of the international community in 2013, the functioning of the police and the justice system has deteriorated again, partly due to the worsening security situation.

Map of Afghanistan, map work: UvA-Kaartenmakers, Castricum





Partly because of the resurgence of the Taliban and other armed groups, Dutch focus areas such as community policing and human rights – including women’s rights – have been relegated to the background.

Other factors contributing to the limited progress in Kunduz are widespread corruption, nepotism and interference by politicians and other influential players in the police, the Public Prosecution Service and the judiciary. Furthermore, there are cultural barriers that make access to justice and equal treatment in the justice system more difficult, particularly for women.

Political development and alignment with long-term goals, local needs and local context

The mission was primarily prompted by the Dutch government’s wish to retain some form of military presence in Afghanistan after the termination of the Dutch mission in Uruzgan. This meant that much of the (military) deployment of the mission was predetermined. The question of what this deployment could contribute to improving the police and the justice system in Afghanistan in the longer term played a subordinate role in the government’s decision.

Partly as a result of this, the design of the mission did not fit well with what was needed for the sustainable strengthening of the police and the justice system in (post-)conflict areas:

- The duration of the mission was too short to achieve the institutional and cultural changes necessary for lasting improvements.
- The Kunduz police and judiciary faced major structural problems, including corruption and interference in the justice system by politicians and unofficial powerbrokers. It was known that the persistence of these problems would hamper long-term improvements.
- Before the mission, the international community had already decided to withdraw within a few years. It knew that this could lead to a deterioration in the security situation, which would hamper lasting improvements.

- It was also known beforehand that staff turnover was very high, especially in the lower ranks of the Afghan police, and that most of the trained officers would leave the police force within a few years. Structural improvement of the police in Kunduz could therefore have been achieved more effectively if the mission had concentrated earlier – and mainly – on improving the police organisation and the police’s own training capacity in Kunduz. The EUPOL component of the mission did focus on this, but the NTM-A training, which took up most of the mission’s financial and human resources, only started training Afghan trainers once it became known that the mission would end earlier than planned.

In order to gain broad political support in the House of Representatives, the Dutch government made promises that hampered the mission’s feasibility and did not match the needs of the Afghans and international allies. For example: police officers trained by the Netherlands were only allowed to be deployed within Kunduz and then only defensively, and Dutch trainers were only allowed to train Afghan Uniform Police (AUP) officers, despite requests from the Afghan Ministry of the Interior and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (KMar) trainers to also train police officers from other divisions of the Afghan National Police (ANP).

Although such conditions made the execution of the mission more difficult, seconded KMar trainers and EUPOL personnel responded where possible to Afghan trainees’ needs and levels of knowledge. Afghan police officers and international police commanders rated the quality of the training courses as high, and their relationships with the Dutch trainers and mentors as good.



Practicing a police patrol, Ministry of Defence, 5 April 2012

Recommendation 1:

When designing police training missions, give more weight to the available knowledge about what is needed to achieve sustainable results and what is known about local needs. Ensure that the pursuit of broad political support does not impede the mission's feasibility and the attainability of the mission objectives.



Considerations relating to allies and their requests generally play an important role in government decisions to undertake missions involving military deployment. Ambitions to contribute effectively and efficiently to long-term improvements of the police and the justice system by means of missions nevertheless require a capacity commitment that is in line with what is needed and appropriate locally, in order to be able to achieve such sustainable improvements.

In contexts where this is appropriate, ensure that from the outset a police training mission is primarily aimed at strengthening local training capacity and the local police organisation – especially when it is known that there are high levels of staff turnover within the lower ranks of the police force. Ensure that the mission's mandate is sufficiently flexible so that mission activities can be adapted in time if local contexts or needs change.



Too few police officers to train

For a large part of the mission period, there were insufficient junior Afghan police officers to be trained. This was partly due to the restrictive mission conditions promised to the House of Representatives and partly due to local circumstances, such as the fact (known beforehand) that a large proportion of the police officers in Kunduz had already been trained or could not be freed up to follow training courses.

In addition, different countries and missions competed with each other in order to be able to train people, both within the police force and within the justice chain. As a result, Afghan officials were able to 'shop around' the various donors, to find out which country or organisation would offer them the best compensation in return for providing training course participants.

Progress reports

The monitoring and evaluation of the mission and the reporting to the House of Representatives were carried out by the ministries involved.

Although there were not enough police officers available to train during the mission, the leadership in The Hague and Kunduz wanted to create the best possible image of the mission in the media and the House of Representatives. Dutch personnel involved within all parts of the mission experienced pressure to paint a positive picture in reports, even if this did not correspond to reality. As a result, the House of Representatives was not always given a transparent report on the progress of the mission. For example, the numbers reported for trained police officers included trainees who had already dropped out, while trainees who had followed several training courses were counted multiple times and certificates were awarded to people who did not meet the stipulations in the guidelines.

Staff members also felt pressured to present a positive story with regard to the rule of law programme. However, the progress and quality of some of the projects were difficult for the staff

members to assess, partly because they were unable to visit some of the projects and had to work via intermediaries. Moreover, the self-evaluation reports of the implementing partners were largely uncritical. This also made it difficult for IOB to make reliable statements about the quality of these projects.

Recommendation 2:



Report both positive and negative facts in a transparent manner: from the mission area to the ministries, and from the ministries to the House of Representatives. Invest in a learning organisation.

2018 saw the launch of the government-wide Quality Insight operation, which challenges departments to be more critical and open about their results, and to make more active use of the insights gained in order to learn from them. Use the leads in this operation to drive cultural change in the longer term.

In the short term, increase the transparency of missions by having the interim and final evaluations for the House of Representatives carried out by an independent party rather than by the departments involved themselves.



Chain approach

The Dutch mission aimed to strengthen not only the individual components of the justice chain – the police, the Public Prosecution Service, the judiciary and the legal profession – but also the cooperation between them, as well as the informal justice system.

The “chain approach” matched the existing knowledge about what is needed for the successful strengthening of the police and the justice system in (post-)conflict areas. It also fitted in well with the Afghan judicial context, although in practice it proved difficult to ensure that certain components of the chain – particularly the police and the Public Prosecution Service – worked well together. The

chain approach was therefore frequently praised by interviewees from Afghanistan, Germany and the Netherlands as a strong component of the mission.

Recommendation 3:



Continue to use the “chain approach” in similar future missions.

During similar future police training missions, strive again to improve the entire justice chain and the cooperation between the different components.

At work with instruction cards at the police training centre in Kunduz, Ministry of Defence, 12 March 2013





Interdepartmental cooperation

The three Dutch ministries involved (Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Justice and Security) cooperated intensively in implementing the chain approach and managing the mission, both in The Hague and in Kunduz. This integrated approach was emphasised in communication about the mission to the House of Representatives and the media.

Interviewees from Afghanistan, Germany and the Netherlands saw the interdepartmental management as a strength of the mission.

In practice, the cooperation between staff from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence generally went well and, according to those involved in both ministries, provided considerable added value.

Although the three components were presented in the Netherlands as a single integrated mission and the EUPOL component fell in the Netherlands under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice and Security, the Dutch EUPOL staff in Kunduz were governed by EUPOL in Brussels. As a result, they had a different reporting line, a different mission mandate and different conditions of employment, which hampered cooperation and led to problems in the coordination between the Dutch EUPOL staff and the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence.

Nevertheless, there were also examples of successful collaboration between the three components of the mission, such as three ‘scenario-based trainings’ that brought people from different parts of the judicial chain together for a simulation.

Recommendation 4:



Continue to invest in integrated interdepartmental cooperation during missions to strengthen police and justice systems. If there are differences in conditions and reporting lines for the contributions of different departments, be clear about this.

For similar future missions, once again focus on interdepartmental cooperation in management and implementation by, among other things, starting as early as possible with the joint, interdepartmental designing of the plans (see also recommendation 5), and by having seconded staff from all the departments involved go through a joint preparation and pre-deployment training process.

If, like the Kunduz mission, future Dutch missions consist in practice of contributions to various international missions, make sure that the mission’s design and presentation pay explicit attention to any differences in applicable conditions and reporting lines. Transparency in this regard strengthens mutual understanding between staff members of the various components and prevents unrealistic expectations.



Improving the situation of women in the police force

About a year elapsed between the initial preparations for the mission and its actual start in July 2011. However, at the time of the start of the mission, there was no concrete plan to improve the situation for female police officers in Kunduz province, even though this was a formal mission goal.

There were also few female interpreters and the vast majority of Dutch deployed personnel were male – not only the military but also Ministry of Foreign Affairs, EUPOL and KMar staff in civilian roles. The low number of women deployed in civilian roles not only hampered cooperation with Afghan women, but also, according to Dutch informants involved, undermined the credibility of the Dutch advocacy for equality between men and women in Afghanistan.

now primarily rests with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is also structurally anchored within the Ministry of Defence and any other ministries involved.

Six-monthly rotations

The execution of the mission was, according to many, hampered by the six-monthly rotation of personnel, which mostly limited the work of people in civilian roles (both deployed Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff and KMar police trainers). EUPOL personnel generally remained in the mission area for a longer period of time. The six-monthly deployment period was too short to establish good relations with Afghan counterparts, led to a loss of knowledge and encouraged short-term thinking on the part of deployed personnel.

Recommendation 5:



Incorporate into the mission design in good time a sound plan, based on expert knowledge, for strengthening the position of women.

UN Resolution 1325 calls on the Member States to pay more attention to gender equality and the position of women in peace-building missions. The Netherlands has a National Action Plan to implement Resolution 1325 through cooperation between the government, knowledge institutes and NGOs.

Put this aim into practice by, from the first phase of a possible new mission, exploring what ‘improving the position of women’ means in the specific context and how this can be given shape in the mission design and implementation. This requires that ownership of the themes in Resolution 1325, which

Recommendation 6:



Leave open the possibility of deploying staff in civilian roles for a period longer than six months.

For future missions, set the duration of the deployment of civilian staff on a flexible basis, taking into account contextual factors and personal circumstances.

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Cover photo: Police office in Khanabad, source: Ministry of Defence, 2013.

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